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Ten Signs It Just Won't Work

Get a group of Weimaraner breeders together, and invariably the topic of puppy placement becomes a subject of conversation. Side by side are kudos for fabulous owners, and “war stories” about placements that were disastrous.

After participating in a number of conversations about placements that have gone wrong, I've noticed some common threads - indicators that a placement just won't work. It's easy spot “red flag” indicators when they occur in bunches, but it's harder when most of the conversation is good but there are one or two things you're just not sure about. Following are a few that are my personal “red flags”.

- The family schedule leaves the puppy alone for hours and hours. Although the buyers are well intentioned, their life is overly crowded with other commitments. There are only 24 hours in a day, and puppies need a big chunk of time.
- The buyer talks repeatedly about breeding. Make sure you're not enabling a backyard breeder.
- The puppy won't live in the house. Don't all the books warn that, “Weimaraners can't be relegated to the kennel.”?
- There's no fenced yard, “...but we walk a lot.” You have to wonder how they feel about walks in pounding rain, sleet, snow, and broiling temperatures, - and don't forget those 2:00AM, “I gotta go out” pleas.
- The buyer, or members of the family, have health issues that preclude the activity level needed for raising and maintaining a dog. Beware when there are repeated questions about allergies, strength of the dog, and how much they shed.
- You suggest obedience training and the response is, “I don't need training classes, - I know how to train my dogs by myself.” Then you have to wonder if the previous dogs were good solid family members, or terrors on paws who were banished to the backyard.
- In conversation there's a history of other dogs that, “...didn't work out.”
- The buyer has very limited money. Let's face it, to keep the puppy in good condition it takes substantial cash for good-quality food, veterinary care and general maintenance.

- This one is sometimes hard to spot. The buyer evidences lack of savvy about animal behavior. There are people who don't respond to the signals that we, as dog people, take for granted. We're not looking for Dr. Dolittle "talk to the animals" skill, but enough savvy that the person is understanding of canine behavior.

You don't have good rapport with the person. Placing puppies is not an exercise in making new friendships (that's an occasional bonus). However, if you're not comfortable with a person, it limits communication. It's also an issue of when you can't put your finger on it but you have a gut reaction that a person is not a good match for your puppy. When in doubt, go with your gut.

As I write this list, I wonder how many of your personal memories I've stirred up? Are you proud of adding your puppies to loving, caring homes or are there regrets for not spotting a bad situation or not seeing through a falsehood?

The purpose here is not to send shudders of guilt or give pats on the back. The purpose is to remind us all that placing puppies is one of the hardest parts of breeding dogs. Hopefully, ticking off ten things that have "bitten" me and other breeders will help to get great homes for our wonderful gray dogs.

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